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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

A LOUIS XV. BEDROOM.

BY ADA CONE.

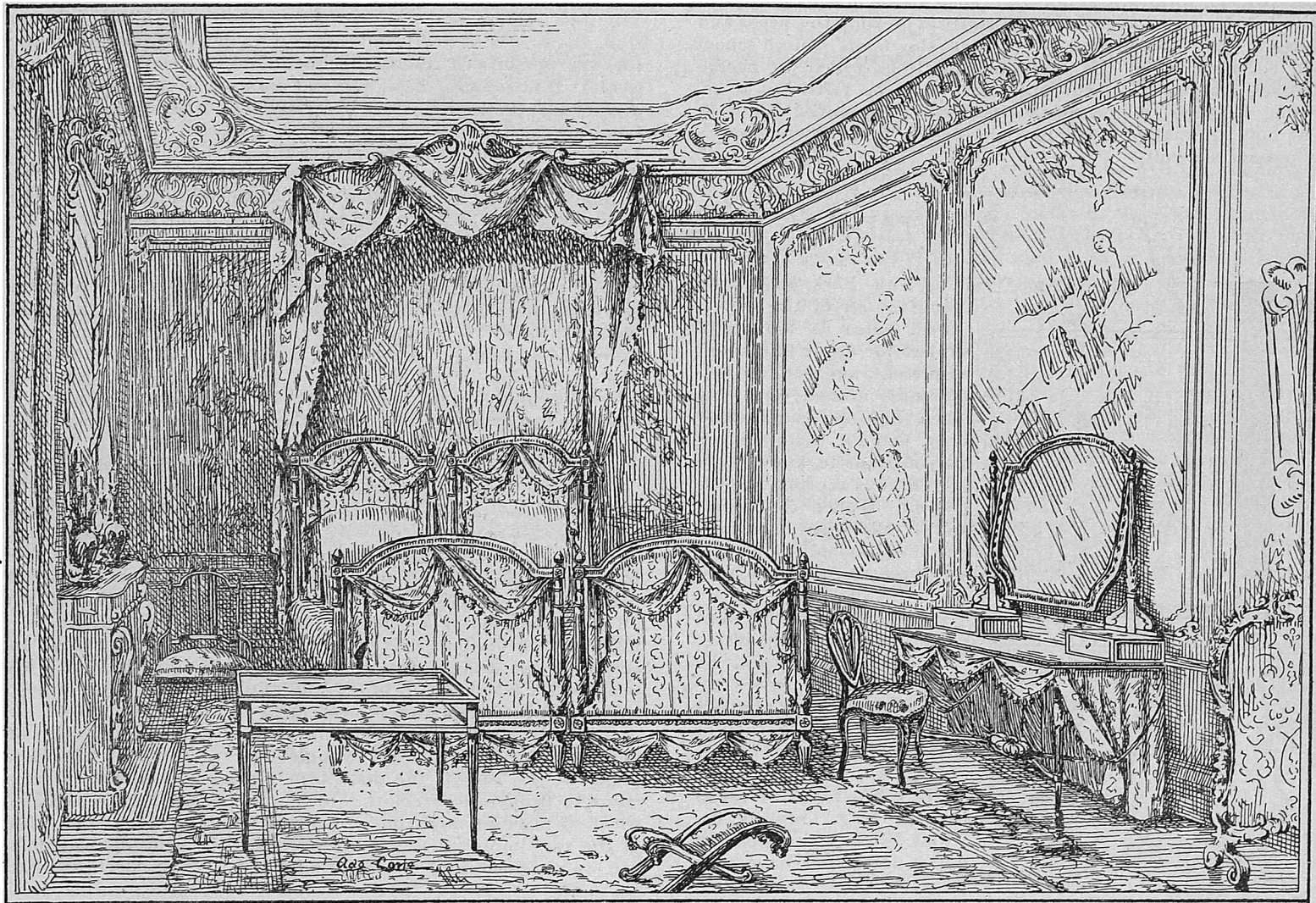


IN furnishing a bedroom the decorator encounters an æsthetic difficulty that he finds nowhere else in the house. It lies in the fact that this room is peculiarly individual. In choosing its decoration, therefore, the elementary question, the basis proposition, on which depends the æsthetic fitness or non-fitness of its furnishing should be: What are the temperament and habits of the individual who is to occupy it? for the room should harmonize with them, whatever they are. Now as the decorator might be thought over inquisitive if he asked,—Madam, are you frivolous? or—Madam, are you severe? and being left to his own unenlightened discretion, he too often ignores this question altogether, with occasional incongruous results.

In the absence of data regarding the occupant's temperament, certain conventional rules for choice of a style to be used, to

of the style to modern taste and modern hygiene, and concerning this furniture at its best, the decorator need not question whether the future occupant of a room is a voluptuary, but only whether she, or he, prefers the charming grace, piquancy, to the more classic and simple, forms of beauty. The furniture shown in the drawing of the Louis XV. bedroom in this number was designed at the establishment of Frederick Rodé, of Fifth avenue, New York, and shows some of the simplest elements of the Louis Quinze style. The wood is of satin-wood, gilded; the uprights of the beds are upholstered, pale blue lampas being the material; the draperies are of the same material, as is also the canopy. Two single beds side by side are shown, as is much the custom now, in place of the old double bed. The chairs may be covered with the lampas, but uniformity in them is not necessary. The crystal table for holding fans and laces is lined with quilted blue satin. Tapestry is here suggested as a covering for the walls, but Mr. Rodé has obtained exquisite effects by the use of lampas (silk, or silk and wool, brocade), laying it on the side walls in smooth panels and on the ceiling in flat plaits.

People who object to textile covered walls on the score of health, will find papers and painted walls, in pale colors, in use as backgrounds for Louis Quinze furniture. The appropriate mantel is of white marble and its furnishings are of Chinese



A LOUIS XV. BEDROOM. (DRAWN BY ADA CONE.)

obtain, and these are not without reason. For example, Louis XV. furniture, by its lightness, grace, elegance and delicacy, commends itself as being peculiarly appropriate to the rooms of women. Add to these its fragility and its ornamental qualities, and its suitability to guest chambers is apparent, but for men's rooms, something more grave and substantial would be chosen; while its complexities of form and its affectations make it entirely unsuited to the rooms of children, which should be extremely simple.

Still, after due weight has been given to these distinctions, one may be permitted to suggest that there are women and women, and that nowadays they are, perhaps, the exception who would find a harmonious setting in the capricious fantasticalities which perfectly suited the taste of Pompadour and du Barry. This remark is not intended to slur, however, the fact that in its purity the Louis XV. furniture represents the highest perfection of beauty, both of structure and ornamentation, ever attained in furniture, and that its best elements have been the model for all the world ever since.

There is in vogue at present a modification of the Louis Quinze furniture, the result of an attempt to adapt the essentials

porcelain or cloisonné, and sculpture gilt. As to the rug, any one of light tone will do. One large rug, with the patterns radiating from the center, adapts itself well to a bedroom, because its lines fall in with the lines of the bed as the latter projects towards the center of the room, whereas in an all-over pattern the bed simply cuts into and interrupts the design. The effect will be especially satisfactory if the ceiling is treated from the center.

The position of the bed in the room is most important. It should occupy the middle of one wall and project with three sides isolated. This is demanded by modern laws of health, which will have neither alcoves, corners, nor enveloping curtains, but instead the freest circulation of air attainable. There is an æsthetic reason also, for placing the bed conspicuously. It is the leading feature of the room and the central idea, and should, therefore, by the laws of taste, have the place of honor, with everything else subordinate.

Leading characteristics of the Louis Quinze style are gilding, ornate sculpture and tapestry. Furniture, whether of wood, copper, bronze or marble, is all richly hand-chiseled. Even picture-frames are elaborately sculptured. Artists of high ability in that

day lavished their skill on the carving of table legs, with the result that the pier-table became an objective point of interest and occupied greatly the attention of connoisseurs. Some of these tables were of bronze, some had feet of copper or bronze, and all were carved in high relief with medallions, and ribbons, and wreaths of flowers.

This age applied textiles to every devisable use. The Gobelin and all tapestry, were woven to imitate pictures, whose subjects were fables, mythology and love. Chairs, sofas, cushions, screens, walls, all were of pictured tapestry framed in gold.

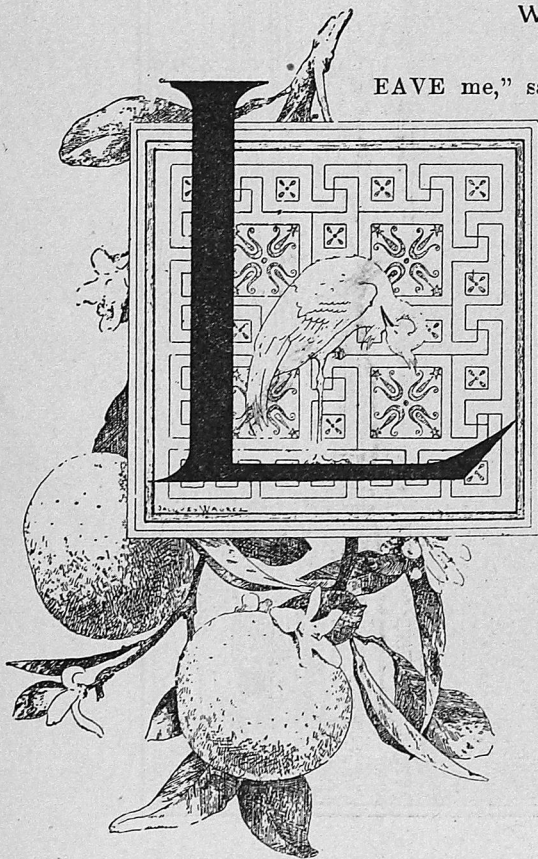
As to marquetry a nice distinction must be made. That of ebony and shell, so fashionable in the age preceding, was abandoned and wood veneering took its place, perfectly expressing the insincerity of the period. Happily, veneering is not an essential element of the style, and no one will care to revive it. Lacquer, both Japanese and French, was in vogue, and was applied both to furniture and walls.

White and gold, so much in favor at present, are Louis Quinze colors—if I may call them colors—and easily suggest a selection of Louis Quinze forms to embody them.

Some study of the essential elements of the style will be more profitable to those interested in furnishing than an observation of promiscuous examples, as in imitation the defects are often exaggerated and the real thought overlooked.

When original artists in America consent to give attention to designs for furniture, as did the French artists of the Eighteenth century, we shall have a style perfectly expressing the needs and tastes of our modern life. Until then the Louis Quinze school will continue to be the fountain-head from which to choose motives, and our judgment will continue to be restricted to selecting between its rococo excesses and its essential beauties. The only alternative is the Eastlake school, from which there is at present a revolt.

WALL-PAPER.



"LEAVE me," said a New York wall-paper manufacturer to the writer. "Wall-paper is too big a subject for me to talk about at present, and you had better come around some day when I'm not particularly busy, and I'll then tell you all you want to know."

"There is no time like the present," replied the writer, and I only wish to occupy you long enough to answer a few questions on the subject."

"Well, what do you want me to tell you?" said he.

"I wish to know," said the writer, "how wall-paper compares with the other methods of mural decoration, such as fresco painting, stereochrome, distemper, or oil painting?"

"It compares with them in this way," replied he, "that all the old systems of mural decoration have been practically destroyed by wall-paper. Wall papers are made in every variety, from the

cheapest blank to the finest conceptions of living artists, marvelously produced, and when a man can carry the entire frescoing of a palace in a hand wagon, ready for application to the walls, he possesses a power that is indisputable."

"Where do you say wall-paper first originated?"

"Wall-paper was originally made in China and Japan, and was produced in small squares for mural application. But wall-paper, as we know it, is a French idea, and was invented in Paris about the year 1730. Wall-paper manufactured in a continuous machine-made roll is an American idea, and was the invention of Josiah Bumstead, of Boston, about the year 1835. The history of wall-paper is in a sense a history of modern civilization. Every decorative craze has been reproduced by paper-hangings, and a century and a half of decorative art has been recorded on the emblazoned tissues of the wall-paper manufacturer."

"What do you mean by stating that the history of wall-paper is a history of modern civilization?" queried the writer.

"Well, I'll tell you," said the manufacturer. "The father of the wall paper industry was Reveillon, who established the first wall-paper factory in Rouen, in 1789. Zuber, Jacquemart, Defour, Limon, Delicourt, Madère, Defossé and Duptain were the more famous successors to Reveillon during the period 1790 to 1860. The designs on French wall-papers have underwent seve-

ral historical changes in harmony with the history of the country itself. During the period 1730 to 1785 the designs were Louis the XV. and Louis XVI., which reproduced the drapery, upholstery, cornices, carvings, etc., of the times. There were many set scenes for panels of a pastoral or romantic character. An ideal school of designers outlined shepherds and shepherdesses of the Watteau type, and scenes from the popular novels of Les Incas and Paul and Virginia. Those were the halcyon days of the French nobility, who reveled in scenes representing Oriental interiors, Brazilian forests, Swiss and Chinese compositions, and imaginative occurrences in fabulous countries. The second period of wall-paper belongs to the Revolutionary period. The pictures were stern and classical; the shepherdesses were gone. It was as much as the designer's life was worth to produce a design in Louis XVI. style. The nation revelled in the Roman toga, the consular fasces, the licitor's axe and the cap of Liberty. The escutcheons were symbols of "liberty," "equality," "fraternity," "law," "justice" and "peace" were adored. Robespierre and his associates were the true designers of that period, and their favorite color was carmine. This period of design was followed by that of the First Empire. On the wall-paper of this period were represented the battle of Austerlitz, the Pyramids of Egypt, fights between brigands and Roman carabineers, dances on the Bay of Naples, the story of Psyche and other mythological events, hunting scenes and such like. Napoleon was the designer of the period, which in turn was followed by that of the Louis Philippe regime and the revival of Gothic subjects. Scenes from the novels of Scott and Hugo were popular, and romantic life was worshipped anew, and there was no end of mediæval castles, troubadours, hawking and hunting scenes, knights in armor, and the reproduction of costly tapestries. Heraldic symbols, architectural ornaments, floral conceits, columns, balustrades, vases, etc., were the proper things for mural decoration. Then followed the fac-simile or present era in wall-papers. The human figure is absent, and we are shown imitations of velvets, damasks, tapestries, etc. The imitation is in no sense a disparagement of the wall-paper. It is a transformation of the more costly fabrics into a cheaper material. The finest decorative fabrics of all ages, the costly housings of antiquity, the priceless tapestries of the middle ages and of modern times, the most precious tissues of China and Japan, the finest silks and brocades, the emblazoned leathers of Spain and Hungary—anything and everything, whether moulded, carved, diapered, plushed, felted, burnished or embossed—have been reproduced in all their splendor in paper, the most convenient and cheapest of all vehicles for fixing such beauty to the wall."

"What about the history of wall-paper in this country?"

"In the United States wall paper first came into use about 1769. We read of Washington and La Fayette themselves hanging imported paper on the walls of the banquet hall of Mount Vernon. In 1789, Plunkett Heeson established a wall paper factory in Philadelphia. A few years afterwards Josiah Bumstead began to manufacture wall paper goods in Boston. Prior to 1835 all paper-hangings were made by hand in square sheets, Chinese fashion, necessitating their being pasted together afterwards. In that year the firm of Josiah Bumstead & Son are credited with inventing a machine to print wall-paper in one color, which, though crude, was a vast improvement on the hand process for rapid work. This necessitated the use of a continuous strip of paper, and these two ideas completely revolutionized the wall-paper trade. In 1839 the same firm invented an improved machine to print in four colors, which was a great improvement on the first machine, and could turn out 200 rolls a day. An idea of the vast improvements made since then in printing machines can be obtained by contemplating a twelve-color machine that turns out 5,000 rolls a day. Of course the idea of printing wall-paper by machinery led to the establishment of quite a number of factories about the year 1840. Mr. A. Harwood started a factory in Carmine Street, New York, in 1838, and, in 1844, R. Prince had a factory in Pearl Street, near Burling Slip. In 1840 Philadelphia had five factories, established by John Bellrose, Blanchard & Curry, Howell Brothers, Longstreth & Sons, and Isaac Pugh. The firm of Howell Brothers is still in existence, and owns perhaps the largest wall-paper factory in the world. In 1840 Joseph Barry started a factory in Worcester, Mass. After various changes in the style of the firm and location of the factory, the firm, in 1859, became Bigelow, Hayden & Co., and the factory was located in Roxbury, Mass., where business was done up to 1877. In 1855 the firm of Christy & Constant was established in New York, Mr. Christy having originally started a factory, in 1835, in Poughkeepsie. The business, under various changes of the firm, continued up to 1887, when, on the break-up of the last pool, operations were suspended and the plant was sold."

"I suppose the business at present has attained enormous proportions?"

"The business since 1840 has steadily increased in growth and importance. In 1840 the output of all the American factories was 2,000,000 rolls; in 1850, 15,000,000 rolls; in 1860, 30,000,000 rolls; in 1870, 45,000,000 rolls; in 1880, 65,000,000 rolls; in 1890, 100,000,000 rolls. Since 1887 a free competition among the manu-